

MEN OF THE HOUR.



ARTHUR ORTON,

alias

THOMAS CASTRO.

Who Claimed to be Sir Roger Charles Tichborne, was convicted of the crime, and has just been liberated after nearly eleven years' imprisonment.

Interest in one of the most remarkable cases on record is revived by the liberation of Arthur Orton, who has completed his term of imprisonment, the usual deductions for good conduct having been made. The ex-convict is usually known as "the Tichborne claimant." He has been a notorious public character for many years, and will continue to be an object of interest down to the time of his death. His crime was the first instance in English legal records in which an impostor assumed identity with a known person. The stake he played for was a heavy one, title and vast landed estates; and the degree of success which he attained previous to the collapse of his policy was remarkable, especially so as persons of culture and standing, as well as myriads of ordinary people, believed that "the Claimant" claimed no more than his just rights. This theory is still held by many, and the interests of the false "Sir Roger," and his family are safe in the keeping of good-natured credulity. The story of Orton's career, crime, and conviction, surpasses romance in its interest. It is best introduced by the relation of a few facts respecting the man he claimed to be.

Roger Charles Tichborne was born January 5, 1829, in the city of Paris. He was, after his father, heir to the title and estates of his uncle, Sir Edward Doughty-Tichborne. After receiving the rudiments of education in France, he entered the Roman Catholic College of Stonyhurst, England, as a student. When twenty years old, he became an officer in the British army. Three years after that time, he made an offer of marriage to Kate Doughty, daughter of the gentleman whose heir he was. She refused him, whereupon he sold his commission and went to sea. On June 19, 1853, he landed at Valparaiso, and on April 20, 1854, sailed from Rio de Janeiro for New York. The ship was subsequently lost with all on board. At the death of Sir Edward Doughty-Tichborne, Roger's father succeeded to the estates; and when he died, June 11, 1862, it being believed that Roger had been lost at sea, Alfred, his younger brother, inherited them. Alfred died February 22, 1866, three months before the birth of his heir, who will take the estates and title upon attaining his majority.

So far there seems to be slight or no chance of the most audacious assumption of identity with the lost Roger being successful. The opportunity was due to the incredulity of the mother of the missing heir. She refused to believe that her son was dead, and in 1865, advertised for him in English and Australian papers. The next year, Arthur Orton, a butcher known at the place of his residence, Wagga Wagga, Australia, as Thomas Castro, claimed to be the missing gentleman. He employed an attorney, who opened a correspondence with the mother. In consequence of this she sent Orton alias Castro, money wherewith to pay his passage to Europe, and received him in Paris, January, 1867. She professed to recognize him, and henceforth, until the time of her death, March 12,

1868, treated him as her long lost and restored son. In his relations with rich and titled persons, after going to Europe, and making claim to be Sir Roger, Orton carried himself with considerable dignity. The true Sir Roger probably would have lost something of the easy gentility of his early years, after years of romantic isolation from the scenes of his youth. From the first the stranger's appearance divided the family, relations and friends between who believed and those who did not accept his claims to be Roger Charles Tichborne.

In 1867, "the Claimant" began an action for the recovery of the Tichborne property. It was at that time worth above \$120,000 a year. Before the case was finished it was mortgaged, so heavy were the expenses of the litigation. The action was begun in May, 1871, about four years having been spent in sending commissions to South America and Australia. It lasted 103 days, terminating in the non-suit of the plaintiff, March 6, 1872.

The tables were now turned. Criminal proceedings were opened against "the Claimant," who was charged with perjury. Legions of friends assisted him with gifts of money and by buying bonds payable from the proceeds of the Tichborne estate when he should become their owner. The period from April 23, 1873, to February 28, 1874, was taken up with the second "Tichborne" trial, which resulted in the conviction of the prisoner, as Arthur Orton. In this name he was sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment. He was sent first to Millbank Prison, from whence he was removed to Dartmoor. The remainder of his term, which was shortened considerably in reward for uniformly good conduct, was spent at Portsea Prison, with the exception of the last few days at Pentonville, London, from whence he was liberated. An admirer has settled an annuity of a hundred pounds a year upon him. He has received an offer to appear on the stage. As an inn-keeper what is left of his ambition would be abundantly gratified.

A few sentences as to why the jury convicted him. They were convinced by the testimony presented that the prisoner, Arthur Orton, was five years younger than Roger Charles Tichborne. It was shown that he was born June 1, 1834, the son of George Orton, and that he was named Arthur. When he returned to London he sought out the Ortons at Wapping. His education was proved to be inferior to that of Roger. He could not speak French, which Roger spoke better than he did English. Some physical differences between the two men were found to be of one inch in their height, ears shaped very unlike, and the absence of tattoo marks on Orton, whereas Roger had been marked in his youth.

Ex-convict Orton is a pleasant-looking man, gentle in his manners and discourse. There is an air of refinement about him, difficult to account for; but whatever of mystery has characterized his career, enough is known of him to warrant the conclusion that his conviction was just.

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